

Introduction to Covenant Theology- Part 3

Written by Calvin Fox

Thursday, 18 September 2008 14:41 -

He began to reveal a Plan in the Bible, called **The Covenant of Grace**, that He would make with the Elect to counter the effects of the Covenant of Works He had made with Adam. He began to reveal this Plan to Adam himself, right after his big transgression. This Plan would not fail. The heart of it was (and is) the perfect life and obedience of the One of whom Adam was the “type” (in the Bible, a type is a person or thing prefiguring a future person or thing, such as the Tabernacle was a type of Heaven) Christ is the Second Adam. All of human history is grounded in these two Figures. Amazing! All human beings today are either in union with the First Adam or with the Second Adam. (The most important question you could ask anyone is: “Are you in Adam or in Christ?” Of course, most will have no idea what you are talking about!)

Millions of men, since Adam, had lived, done millions of things, and died. The historical life and singular act of only one of them is “mythic” in the same sense that Adam’s was. The life and act of this one man would change the eternal destiny of hundreds of millions of the sons and daughters of Adam. Christ’s perfect obedience would counter Adam’s disobedience and by it, billions of lost sinners would be saved and become the People that God always wanted.

The Covenant of Grace involved the incarnation of God the Son, Jesus, and the sacrificial offering of his perfect life on behalf of those whom God had chosen. That offering would be his act of obedience.

Now, their wills being in bondage to their fallen nature, no person would or could chose to accept Christ or what He did on their behalf. God’s Plan of Election was the only way any people at all would be saved. God the Spirit effectively called the Elect (and still does) when they hear the Gospel. He works the miracle of regeneration in their hearts, freeing them from that spiritual bondage so that they are free to chose Christ. God the Spirit convicts them of their sin and awakens saving faith within them. That is, God gives the chosen both repentance and faith. They come to Christ. They willing accept Him as Lord and their Savior. That is all of Grace, all of God own doing.

Revival techniques can be used to artificially generate pseudo repentance and people can be manipulated to pray the Sinners Prayer. Such repentance and faith is of no avail. It is must not be accepted as the “real thing”.

If it were left to sinners to decide whether or not to come to Christ, they would chose not to do it. To allow the fulfillment of God’s Plan to rest on the “free” will of sinners is unthinkable. To allow the sacrificial offering of Christ on behalf of sinners to be rejected and come to nothing is unthinkable. Unconditional Election (the work of God the Father) and prevenient and irresistible Calling (also known as Irresistible Grace, the work of God the Spirit), are the only hope for any lost sinner to be saved. The consequence of Adam’s disobedience requires it. That made Election essential and an Atonement limited to only those who were elected to accept it, the effective way of achieving it. If it were not for the Covenant of Grace, none of us would be saved.

Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement and Irresistible grace, as well as Perseverance, are known as the Five Points of Calvinism, TULIP, or the “Doctrines of Grace“. In my experience, most Evangelicals are not Calvinists and many of those who are “5 Pointers” are not Reformed Calvinists, meaning they are not Covenanters. This leads to the next topic:

Introduction to Covenant Theology- Part 3

Written by Calvin Fox

Thursday, 18 September 2008 14:41 -

Covenants today.

The Elect, in their personal history, enter into union with Christ by repentance and faith. They do not simply have a Savior, they actually have a union with Christ. This is an extremely important doctrine. Just as we were lost “in Adam”, so we are saved “in Christ”, our federal Head. Many seem to think that they are saved by having the experience of being born again or because they said the Sinner’s Prayer or simply because they believe Jesus died for them. Not so! If anyone is saved it is because of a union with the Second Adam, just as people are lost because of their union with the First Adam.

God sees, reckons or considers those who entered into never ending union with Christ by repentance and faith, as righteous. They have no righteousness in themselves. The repentance and faith are not works of righteousness. Instead, they have the righteousness of Christ. We have a right standing before God because the perfect obedience of Christ is imputed to us. (By His imputed obedience, we are saved- exactly as, by Adam’s disobedience we had been lost sinners). This is the Gospel of grace.

This Gospel of Grace or, better, this Covenant of Grace has always been the way sinners become saved. There have been saved people since Adam’s day on this same basis of grace. People were never saved by the Law, always by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. We look back to the Cross. Saints in the Hebrew Bible (what we misleading call the Old Testament) looked forward to the cross, starting with Adam and his family.

The Covenant of Grace was progressively revealed through out the Bible- some to Adam, more to Noah, even more to Abraham and then to Moses and the Prophets. There has always been only one Covenant of Grace, although the way in which it was ministered and the responsibilities laid on its beneficiaries has changed through the years. Finally, this Covenant in its fullness was revealed by Jesus and the Apostles. In this form, it is properly called the New Covenant- the original old Covenant of Grace now in its final finished form. (All this makes for the unity of the entire Bible and for a fascinating Bible study.) Many Christians in my experience do not know anything about the Covenant because older ones were raised in Dispensationalism and newer Evangelicals are being raised in a pared down, “mere” or core expression of the Faith. (The primary exception are those few Christians raised in conservative Presbyterian and Reformed circles).